unesco International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

Benin: Education Country Brief

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Background

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manages the Secretariat of the Africa KIX 19 Hub. Together with the associated webpages on UNESCO IICBA's website, the brief is to be updated as new information becomes available, typically every year. The brief starts with a review of basic data on educational outcomes including learning poverty, educational attainment, and the human capital index. The focus then shifts to information related to the thematic areas of focus of the KIX Africa 19 Hub, namely: (i) learning assessment (ii) early childhood education; (iii) teaching & learning (iv) data challenge; (v) gender equality; and (vi) equity and inclusion. The brief also includes links to country documents and processes as well as a range of other resources and websites.

Educational Outcomes and Human Capital

Benin faces a low learning crisis compared to many other African countries. Although its learning poverty rate, the share of children not able to read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10, estimated by the World Bank, UNESCO, and other organizations , is relatively lower at 56 percent (see Table 1 for selected statistics). This indicates a significant portion of the child population in Benin is still struggling with basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Schooling does not imply learning, but lack of learning increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. Learning poverty is one of the factors contributing to low educational

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higher for males (52 percent) compared to females (43 percent). Gross enrollment in tertiary education was at 15 percent for men versus 8 percent for women. This shows that there is a significant drop-off in enrollment and completion as students progress to the next levels. Additionally, Low educational attainment especially for girls is due in part tom relatively high levels of child marriage and early childbearing.

Another useful statistic is the Human Capital Index for Benin based on six variables: (i) the probability that a child will survive past age five (91 percent); (ii) the years of schooling that a child is expected to complete by age 18 (9.2 years); (iii) the level of learning that a child is expected to acquire (384); (iv) the learning-adjusted years of schooling that a child is expected to complete, a measure combining the two previous measures (5.7 years); (v) the adult survival rate (77 percent of 15-year olds surviving until age 60); and finally (vi) the probability that a child will not be stunted in early childhood (no recent data available). Based on those six variables, the expected productivity in adulthood of a child is estimated in comparison to full productivity that could be expected with full education and health. The estimate is that a child born in Benin today will reach only 40 percent of its potential. This is slightly lower than the average for Sub-Saharan Africa region and lower than the average for Lower middle-income countries.

One last statistic may help make the case for the importance

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earnings of the labor force, which in turn depends on the level of educational attainment of the labor force. The latest estimates from the World Bank suggest that human capital wealth in Benin accounts for 63 percent of national wealth.

Table 1: Selected Statistics for Benin and sub-Saharan Africa (% unless noted otherwise)

Indicator	Benin (recent year)
Educational outcomes	
Learning poverty (10-year-olds)	56
Primary completion rate, female	70
Primary completion rate, male	77
Lower secondary completion rate, female	35
Lower secondary completion rate, male	39
Gross enrollment, secondary, female	43
Gross enrollment, secondary, male	52
Gross enrollment, tertiary, female	8
Gross enrollment, tertiary, male	15
Human capital	
Human capital index	40
Probability of survival past age five	91
Expected years of schooling (years)	9.2
Learning performance (score)	384
Learning-adjusted years of schooling (years)	5.7
Adult survival rate	77
Probability of not being stunted	-
Human capital wealth	
Share of HCW in national wealth (%)	63

Source: Compiled by the authors from various databases. Data from the World Bank for learning poverty and human capital and UNESCO Institute of Statistics for other indicators.

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Selected Literature

Supporting countries in using evidence for policymaking is an objective shared by many organizations and initiatives. Under the KIX initiative for which UNESCO IICBA manages the KIX Africa 19 Hub and collaborates with KIX Africa 21, the focus is on six themes: (i) learning assessment systems (ii) early

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UNESCO IICBA research is also provided.

Learning Assessment Systems [GPE-KIX Discussion Paper]. Learning assessment tools and systems are essential to gauge and improve learning outcomes for students. A primer on large scale assessments from the World Bank provides guidance on such assessments, as does a review of learning assessments in Africa from UNESCO IIEP. Among regional assessments, PASEC (Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems) for francophone countries in West and Central Arica and SEACMEQ (Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) for anglophone countries in East and Southern Africa are the best known. These instruments target primary schools. Also interesting is PISA for development which is being piloted in secondary schools in a few African countries. In Benin, the National Institute for Training and Research in Education (INFRE) is a key institution responsible for developing and implementing learning assessments. These assessments cover various grade levels, including grades 4, 6, and 9, and encompass subjects such as mathematics, language arts, and science. Benin also actively participates in regional assessments, including PASEC for grades 2 and 6, and early grade reading and math assessments (EGRA and EGMA).

Improving Teaching and Learning [GPE-KIX Discussion Paper]. How teachers and students interact and engage is key to

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including a framework for standards and competencies. In Benin many efforts were made to give more children a chance at education. A UNESCO IIEP paper describes practices that have a direct impact on enhancing teaching and learning across three African countries, including Benin.

Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education [GPE-KIX Discussion Paper]. Experiences children undergo in early childhood can affect their entire life. Nurturing care is essential. Essential interventions in early childhood include pre-primary education. Yet less than half of young children in Africa benefit from pre-primary education according to the Global Education Monitoring report 2021. The Office of Research at UNICEF maintains a webpage with useful links to organizations working on child-related themes organized by subject, including early childhood. Data on early childhood development in Benin are accessible from a nurturing care profile and the UNICEF Child well-being profile.

Achieving Gender Equality In and Through Education [GPE-KIX Discussion Paper]. The cost of gender inequality is massive, as is the cost of not educating girls, including in Africa. When girls lack education, this affects their earnings in adulthood, the number of children they will have and their health, as well as their agency, among others. When girls are not in school, they are also at higher risk of child marriage, with again high costs for them, their children, and

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access to education and reduce gender disparities by using data and evidence.

Data Management Systems Strengthening [GPEKIX Discussion Paper]. Education management information systems (EMIS) are key for management. They can also support evidence-based policymaking. In Africa, the African Union's Institute of Education for Development supports member states on EMIS. In addition to EMIS data, other data sources including household surveys, school surveys, student assessments, and impact evaluations of pilot interventions are essential to inform policy. In Benin, the National Institute for Training and Research in Education has established a pedagogical documentation and information service. Additionally, it produces the Education statistical yearbook based on EMIS data, focusing on pre-primary and primary education.

Equity and Inclusion/Leaving No One Behind [GPEKIX Discussion Paper]. Equity and inclusion are major challenges for education systems. Gender, disability, ethnicity, indigenous status, poverty, displacement, and many other factors may all lead some children to lack access to education. In Africa especially, gaps in educational outcomes between groups may be large, as illustrated in the case of disability. Equity must be at the center of education policy on the continent. The UNESCO GEM Report provides

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issues in Africa. This includes studies, discussion papers, training guides, reports, knowledge briefs, data briefs, event summaries, and interviews. Several of those publications focus on Benin. All publications are available on IICBA's website.

Country Policies

Information on Benin's education system and policies is available on the website of the Ministries in charge of Education under the National Institute for Training and Research in Education (INFRE). Benin has an Post 2015 Education Sector Plan (2018-2030).

A few organizations aim to capture education policies on specific themes across countries, including Benin. UNESCO's Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER) covering the themes of the Global Education Monitoring reports, including: inclusion in education (2020 Report), non-state actors in education (2021/22 Report), technology in education (2023 Report) and leadership in education (2024/25 Report, forthcoming). Another example is the World Bank's Education Policy Dashboard.

Knowledge Repositories

Only a few links to the literature on education by theme for Benin, Africa, and globally were provided earlier to keep the

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- AERD: The African Education Research Database hosted by the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge collates research by African scholars on education.

- African Development Bank: The Bank has publications that cover a range of topics, including education. It also hosts ADEA which also has selected publications.

- Global Partnership for Education: GPE is one of the largest funders for education in Africa. It collaborates with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to build and mobilize evidence on education through the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX), which has a Library of research outputs.

- J-PAL: The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab maintains a database of impact evaluations and policy publications, quite a few of which are about education.

- RePEc: Research Papers in Economics is a large archive of research on economics, including the economics of education. It can be searched through IDEAS.

- Teacher Task Force (TTF): The TTF is collaborative across many organizations hosted by UNESCO. It maintains a Knowledge Hub with resources on teacher policies.

- UNESCO HQ: UNESCO is the lead agency in the UN

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- UNESCO IICBA: IICBA is a Category 1 Institute at UNESCO. It conducts research on education in Africa with several publication series and maintains a digital repository.

- UNICEF: Publications can be found under Reports, the Office of Global Insight and Policy, and the Office of Research. Also of interest is the Data Must Speak initiative.

- World Bank: The Open Knowledge Repository provides access to the Bank's research. It includes a section on Africa with country pages including for Benin.

Many organizations maintain websites that include country pages with useful information. Examples include the GPE Benin Country Page; UNICEF Benin Country Page; World Bank Benin Country Page; UNESCO IIEP Country Page. Many organizations also maintain blogs on education issues, often with stories on Africa. Examples include Education for All (Global Partnership for Education), Education for Global Development (World Bank), Education Plus Development (Brookings Institutions), and World Education Blog (UNESCO). Beyond blogs focusing on education, blogs on Africa more generally may also provide useful resources. This includes Africa Can End Poverty and Nasikiliza (the World Bank's two blogs for sub-Saharan Africa) and Arab Voices (the Bank's blog for the Middle East and North Africa).

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World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI). The World Bank also maintain the Education Statistics (EdStats) database. Both World Bank databases rely in part for education on data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. UNESCO also maintains the Global Education Observatory and the World Inequality Database in Education (WIDE), as well as a wide range of other databases. Specific estimates are occasionally maintained by other agencies. For example, UNICEF provides data on out-of-school rates, adjusted net attendance rates, completion rates, foundational learning skills, information communication technology skills, youth and adult literacy rates, and school-age digital connectivity. Another useful reference is StatCompiler which provides data at various levels of aggregation from Demographic and Health Surveys across countries and over time, including Benin. For comparison purposes, data from the OECD for member and partner countries (including South Africa) can be useful.

References

References are available through the links provided in this brief.

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